

Avoiding Sentence Fragments

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

sentence fragment: part of a sentence that is written as if it were a complete sentence; does not have a subject, a predicate, or both; does not express a complete thought

subject of a sentence: tells whom or what the sentence is about

predicate: states what the subject does or is

dependent clause: has both a subject and a verb but does not express a complete thought

HERE'S HOW

Step 1: Look for the subject of the sentence. If you cannot find it, add a subject.

EXAMPLE *Fragment:* surrounds Earth.

Sentence: The atmosphere surrounds Earth.

Step 2: Look for the complete predicate of the sentence. If you cannot find an action or verb related to the subject, add a predicate or add a verb to complete the predicate.

EXAMPLE *Fragment:* The atmosphere of our planet, up about 600 miles.

Sentence: The atmosphere of our planet stretches up about 600 miles.

Step 3: Rewrite the idea as a sentence. If *both* subject and predicate are missing, rewrite the idea so that it contains both a subject and an action or verb.

EXAMPLE *Fragment:* From the oceans into the atmosphere.

Sentence: Water | evaporates from the oceans into the atmosphere.

Step 4: Check punctuation of dependent clauses. If a dependent clause is treated as a sentence, you have two options for correcting it:

EXAMPLE *Dependent Clause:* That raindrops are formed from vapor in clouds.

Option #1—combine the dependent clause with an independent clause.

Sentence: Students learn that raindrops are formed from vapor in clouds.

Option #2—delete, or omit the opening conjunction, article, adverb, or preposition.

Sentence: (~~That~~) Raindrops are formed from vapor in clouds.